

4. Hezekiah Spreads the Threat Before the LORD (37:14–20)

- When Hezekiah received Sennacherib's letter, he did something remarkable: *"and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD"* (v14). Hezekiah did not answer the Assyrian king with counter-threats. He did not panic. He took the problem to God first. Hezekiah literally spread the threatening letter before the LORD (1 Pet 5:7; Phil 4:6). Problems should drive us to prayer rather than to panic.
- Hezekiah's prayer begins, significantly, with God rather than with the problem. He fixes his eyes first upon the character of God: *"O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth"* (v16). He first reminded himself of who God is.
 - God is the *"LORD of hosts"* - the sovereign Commander over all His heavenly hosts. Sennacherib commands a great earthly army, but the LORD is far greater.
 - He is the *"God of Israel"* - the covenant God who has revealed Himself to His people and remains faithful to His promises.
 - He is the One who *"dwellest between the cherubims,"* pointing to His holy & majestic presence above the mercy seat (Exo 25:22; 1 Sam 4:4).
 - He is the one true & living God: *"thou art the God, even thou alone."* The LORD is not one god among many. He alone is God.
 - And He is the Creator: *"thou hast made heaven and earth."* The Assyrians were powerful, but they were still creatures under the authority of their Creator.
- Hezekiah's prayer is powerful because it begins with a deep understanding of who God is. Much depends upon where we fix our eyes. When we focus upon God, we begin to see the problem in its proper perspective. It gives us confidence that our problems are never greater than the God to whom we pray.
- Hezekiah then asks God to hear and see the situation (v17). He is not informing God of something He does not know (Ps 34:15); he is asking God to intervene according to His wisdom and purpose. We pray because God invites us to bring our needs before Him and trust Him to act according to His perfect will. Hezekiah's greatest concern was not simply Jerusalem's danger but God's honour: *"Hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God."* Sennacherib's assault was more than a military threat. His boasts had mocked the God of Israel.

The LORD's Mighty Deliverance (37:1–38)

- Isaiah 36 ended with Jerusalem under intense pressure: would Judah surrender to fear or trust the LORD. Isaiah 37 opens with Hezekiah's response. He does not depend on military strength, political alliances, or human wisdom. Instead, he humbles himself before God in prayer.
- Hezekiah's concern is not merely that Jerusalem might be saved, but that the name and honour of the LORD would be vindicated (v35). The enemy may threaten, but the LORD is able to deliver. Hezekiah shows us what it means to bring an overwhelming crisis before God in humble prayer, leave the matter in His hands, and trust in His sovereign purpose.

1. Hezekiah Seeks the LORD (37:1–4)

- When Hezekiah heard Rabshakeh's words, he *"rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD"* (v1). His first response to the crisis was to humble himself before God. Tearing his clothes and wearing sackcloth expressed deep distress and humiliation before God. Hezekiah recognised his helplessness, but his weakness drove him towards God rather than away from Him. Hezekiah then went into the presence of God - he *"went into the house of the LORD."* Later, he would take Sennacherib's threatening letter and *"spread it before the LORD"* (v14). He took his burden to the LORD. We should not just mourn over a problem but bring that problem to God (Ps 50:15).
- Hezekiah also sought godly counsel. He sent Eliakim, Shebna, and the elders of the priests to Isaiah to seek the LORD's will and intervention (v2). He was the king, yet he recognised that he needed to hear God's Word. There is wisdom in seeking biblical counsel and the prayers of godly believers (Prov 11:14). Hezekiah acknowledged the seriousness of the crisis (v3). It was a day of trouble because Jerusalem faced the real possibility of destruction; a day of rebuke because Judah was under God's chastening; and a day of blasphemy because Rabshakeh had openly mocked the living God. Hezekiah used the striking picture, *"The children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth"* (v3b). Jerusalem had reached the end of her strength. Yet recognising our weakness need not lead to despair; it is the beginning of dependence upon God (2 Cor 12:9). God specializes in mission impossible situations.
- Most importantly, Hezekiah was concerned about the LORD's honour. He asked Isaiah to pray that the LORD would hear *"the words of Rabshakeh,*

whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God" (v4). The issue was bigger than Jerusalem's survival. The living God had been blasphemed. The Assyrians had challenged the LORD, and Hezekiah looked to the LORD to answer that challenge (cf v20). Hezekiah concluded his prayer by asking Isaiah to pray: *"Wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left"* (v4). He did not carry the burden alone (Gal 6:2). Hezekiah did not merely react to the crisis; he took the crisis to God.

2. The LORD Assures Hezekiah (37:5–7)

- Now God speaks: *"Thus saith the LORD..."* (v6). God's Word is authoritative and infinitely greater. The LORD tells Hezekiah not to fear: *"Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard."* Rabshakeh's words were designed to produce fear and doubt, but God tells Hezekiah not to be controlled by them. Fear often grows when we magnify the voices around us and minimise the voice of God. Our confidence rests in knowing who God is and trusting His Word (Eph 3:20).
- Hezekiah had asked that God would hear (v4), and God assures him that He has heard the Assyrians' blasphemy: *"Wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me."* The LORD then says, *"I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land...."* (v7). The repeated emphasis – *"I will"* – is on what God Himself will do. God would sovereignly cause circumstances that would turn Sennacherib away from Jerusalem. Behind the plans of this powerful king stood the sovereign God. Human rulers make plans and nations pursue their own interests, but nothing is outside God's sovereign control (Prov 21:1).
- God's promise came before Hezekiah saw the deliverance. At this point, that promise must have seemed difficult to believe. Yet God has already declared the outcome. Sennacherib soon heard that Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia had come to fight against him (v9). God simply used a report concerning another approaching enemy to redirect Sennacherib. Faith does not require us to understand God's whole plan. Faith rests upon the character of the God who has spoken.
- The LORD also promised that He would eventually cause Sennacherib to *"fall by the sword in his own land"* (v7). V38 records the fulfilment. Sennacherib had mocked the LORD and boasted of his victories. Yet the mighty Assyrian king could not escape the judgment of God. God has spoken (40:8) and one Word from God outweighed all the threats of

Assyria. We may not know what God will do, how He will do it, or when He will do it. But when God speaks, we can trust Him.

3. Sennacherib Renews His Threat (37:8–13)

- Rabshakeh returned to Sennacherib and found him fighting against Libnah, having moved from Lachish (v8). The Assyrian army remained powerful, and Jerusalem was still threatened. God's promise had not failed simply because the circumstances had not yet changed. Faith trusts God while waiting for His Word to be fulfilled. Soon Sennacherib heard *"concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia"* that he had come forth to make war against him (v9). What appeared to be an ordinary political and military development was part of God's providential working. God Himself was directing events according to His purpose.
- Sennacherib, however, sent another threatening message to Hezekiah: *"Let not thy God, in whom thou trustest, deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria"* (v10). Sennacherib was not merely attacking Hezekiah; he was attacking Hezekiah's confidence in God. He pointed to the nations Assyria had conquered and asked, *"And shalt thou be delivered?"* (v11). He named Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, the children of Eden, Telassar, Hamath, Arphad, Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah (vv12–13). His argument was essentially: "Look at what we have already done. Why should you be different?" This is similar to the serpent's strategy of questioning God's Word (Gen 3:1). The issue was ultimately whether God's Word could be trusted.
- Sennacherib made a fatal mistake. He treated the LORD as though He were simply another national deity. The gods of those nations were idols, *"the work of men's hands, wood and stone"* (v19). The LORD, however, is the living God, the Creator of heaven and earth (v16). The idols were false gods; the LORD alone is God. Sennacherib assumed that because other nations had fallen, Jerusalem must also fall. By placing the LORD alongside the powerless gods of the nations, Sennacherib blasphemed the living God. He thought he was threatening Judah, but in reality, he was challenging the LORD Himself (v29).
- Sennacherib thought he was in control. He did not realise that he himself was under God's control. We must never measure God's power by the size of the problem or His faithfulness by the appearance of our circumstances. God is never absent, never surprised, and never out of control (Ps 46).